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ABSTRACT

Approached from a variety of perspectives, the first nine articles in this special journal issue focus on teaching the short story. Specific topics discussed in the articles are (1) the AIM game as a prereading strategy for teaching the short story, (2) short story readers and writers as partners in the act of artistic communication, (3) oral interpretation in the fiction class, (4) using value analysis to teach William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," (5) teaching Ray Bradbury's "There will Come Soft Rains," (6) short stories as writing models, (7) using the title as a clue to the theme when teaching middle school students, (8) teaching the short story in prison, and (9) the need for a critical approach to the fiction class, and (9) the need for a critical approach to the short story in elementary school. The final article in the journal discusses the literature of Illinois. (FL)

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APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE SHORT STORY

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ARTICLES FROM TEACHERS AT ALL LEVELS:

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SPECIAL FEATURE

**Life in Prairie Land:
The Literature of Illinois**

ISSN 0019-2023

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APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE SHORT STORY

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Life in Prairie Land: The Literature of Illinois

(A speech delivered at the 1982 High School-University
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The AIM Game: A Pre-Reading Strategy for Teaching Short Story

CHARLES SUHOR

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

URBANA, ILLINOIS

We hear a good deal about pre-writing — that is, warm up activities for students in preparation for writing assignments. Many teachers have also used *pre-reading* activities as a way of preparing for study of short stories or other literary works. Key vocabulary lists and improvisation exercises are among the techniques that have been used to set the stage for literary experiences.

The AIM Game is a pre-reading sequence in three parts, geared towards involving students in activities that will make their reading a short story more interesting — and more perceptive. The approach has been used successfully in grades 6-12 in the teaching of individual stories, several stories related to a theme, or thematic units that include short stories and other genres.

The teacher pre-selects an appropriate theme and one or more stories that deal with the theme. In the example below, the theme is the relationship between human beings and modern technology. Possible short stories include Donald Barthelme's "Report," Ray Bradbury's "The Rocket Man," Frank Brown's "Singing Dinah's Song," Robert F. Young's "Thirty Days Had September," and Kurt Vonnegut's "Epicac." (There are dozens of other stories, of course, on the humanity/technology theme.)

As the game progresses, students create their own vocabulary list of words related to the theme, explore relationships among words on the vocabulary list, and exchange opinions with regard

to the theme. The AIM Game — which usually takes from two to four class periods — has three steps:

1. **Associating Ideas** — A brainstorming activity in which students in small groups play two word association games using words related to the theme.
2. **Ideas that Match** — A relationship-making exercise in which students, using the two word lists generated in Step 1, make up five pairs of words by matching words from their first word-association list with words from their second word-association list.
3. **My Opinion, Your Opinion** — A discussion game in which students explain why they agree or disagree with five "Opinion Statements" related to the theme.

Associating Ideas Divide your class into groups of four or five students. Ask each group to appoint a recorder who will write down the words called out by other group members. Then give the groups ninety seconds to brainstorm as many words as possible associated with the word "computer." When time is up, the recorder for each group counts and reads aloud the words generated by the group. Have students repeat the process above, using a different sheet of paper to list words that they associate with the word "freedom."

Ideas that Match Have the students in each group match up five words from their "computer" list with five words from their "freedom" list. Unlike the brainstorming game, this step is untimed, and the students should be able to explain in their own words *how* each of the five word-pairs is justified. For example, the students in a group might match the word *document* from their "computer" list with the word *Constitution* from their "freedom" list. They should be able to support the matchup, if called upon to do so, with a statement like "The U.S. Constitution is a kind of document" — a categorization relationship according to specific example/general type.

A member of each group should write the five word pairs on the chalkboard so other groups can read them and ask for an explanation of the relationships that aren't obvious. The nature of the matchup can be any kind of relationship — synonymy, antonymy, categorization, cause-effect, analogy, etc. — that can be explained informally by the students in a group.

My Opinion, Your Opinion Write the following Opinion Statements on the chalkboard, or give students dittoed copies of

the statements. Ask them to read silently and decide, on an individual basis, whether they *agree* or *disagree* with each statement.

Circle the "A" if you agree with the statement. Circle the "D" if you disagree.

- A D 1. The world of the future will be a better place for humanity.
- A D 2. With computers and machines playing such a big part in our lives, we have a tendency to lose contact with nature.
- A D 3. Humanity can dream great dreams, but they aren't likely to come true.
- A D 4. Someday computers and machines will free us from hard labor.
- A D 5. Computers and machines could become so important in our lives that they would actually rule us.

Discuss each statement with the class, asking initially how many agreed and how many disagreed. Don't try to arrive at a "right" answer, but encourage the students to explain *why* they felt as they did, exchanging ideas freely on each of the statements. Often, students will change their opinions during the course of the discussion as the statements are examined closely and the students explore their feelings more fully.

The students are now ready to read Barthelme's "Report," or a similar story on the theme of humans and technology. Note that in Step 1, the students created their own vocabulary list of words associated with themes in the unit. (Teachers report that words on the students' lists often appear in the short story, in fact.) In Step 2, the students' thinking skills were challenged as they put together (often humorously or ingeniously) pairs of words associated with the theme. In Step 3, they clarified their own ideas on crucial issues that the author raises in story. The students themselves, in a sense, are "authors" of words and ideas on how human beings relate to technology. They are prepared to experience Barthelme's exploration of the theme.

Short Story Readers and Writers: Partners in the Act of Artistic Communication

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Most of us, as teachers of literature, count among our pleasurable literary experiences both the reading and the teaching of the short story. As readers, we have over the years accumulated our list of favorite short stories — and we add to and modify that list as we continue to read. As teachers, we experience a special joy when we explore the short story with our students, using one or more of our "special" teaching techniques. One of mine is the "what . . . if" strategy.

In its simplest form, this teaching strategy involves giving students copies of an untitled short story and asking them, after they have read the story, "*If* you had written this story, *what* title would you have given it?" This strategy works particularly well if the teacher uses, on one occasion, a short story or two in which setting is dominant, and on another occasion, uses a short story of character, of action, of atmosphere and tone, of suspense. For example, if the teacher selects stories such as Joseph Conrad's "The Lagoon" or Barrett Willoughby's "One Alaska Night," class speculation about the title eventually focuses on the central importance the author gives to setting in the story. Similarly, speculation about appropriate titles for stories of character leads to increased student awareness of how character traits generate conflict in a short story and affect its resolution, as in Prosper Merimee's "Mateo Falcone" or Shirley Jackson's "Charles." This "what . . . if" technique also works well with stories in which a key symbol is a significant feature of the author's artistry, as in one of my favorites, James Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis." (Undoubtedly, you have your own favorite "symbol" story.)

What this and other challenging "what . . . if" strategies do, in addition to engaging students in enjoyable and purposeful speculation about short stories, is to move the reader and the writer closer together, as partners in the act of artistic communication. Wallace Stegner, both a writer and a teacher of the short story, has suggested that "writer and reader are not separate entities, but mu-

tually indispensable parts of a process. . . . Observing how what is done to him is part of the reader's pleasures; *doing* it is the whole problem of the writer" (*Teaching the Short Story*, University of California, Davis, 1966, pp. 1 and 3). "What . . . if" strategies encourage this partnership.

In a variation of the untitled story strategy, I ask students to examine the title of a story they have not read and then encourage them to suggest what the story might be about. Initially, this strategy tends to produce highly imaginative, unbridled speculation (and the occasional wisecrack from the class joker). Personally, I like such open-ended, free-wheeling discussion to occur. Frequently, I find this learning activity, as it stimulates the positing and testing of hypotheses, results in a good deal of intuitive discovery.

For those teachers preferring a more structured approach, the initial free-flowing speculation about the story's title can be directed into a productive channel of hypothesizing by asking a few appropriate questions about short story elements: Where will the short story take place? Will the setting influence the characters and their actions? Who will be in the story? (Remind students that short stories usually have few characters, and have the students posit a few appropriate traits for each character.) What will happen in the story? How will the story end? Will the story have a main idea, or theme? Other but similar questions may, of course, be necessary.

On occasion, I have the students begin the speculation after they have read in class the first two or three paragraphs of a story. Typically, this portion of the story (the exposition) narrows or begins to limit the possibilities of the story's subsequent direction — something that the title alone leaves less certain. As another variant, I give students copies of a short story with only the ending omitted and ask the class — as a whole, in groups, or individually — to write a suitable ending. Then, we share the student endings, again in a free-flowing discussion but guided by emerging perceptions about the elements of the short story. My favorite story for this strategy is Saki's "The Open Window," from which I block out that striking final line about Mrs. Stapleton's niece Vera, "Romance at short notice was her specialty." Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' "A Mother in Mannville" is another of my favorites for this "what . . . if" strategy.

For students with considerable experience with the short story, I vary this strategy by giving them a possible ending for a short story, and then asking them to sketch out a story for which the given ending would be appropriate. My favorite ending to give

students is "... and he was my brother." This rarely fails to stimulate a good deal of speculative story-building. Sometimes I do this as a class-wide oral activity; on other occasions, I ask students in groups or individually to develop a possible story line, with setting, characters, conflict, narrator (point of view), theme, etc. To conclude this activity, I have students read E. M. Forster's "The Other Side of the Hedge" and Liam O'Flaherty's "The Sniper." (Both stories are included in commonly used anthologies, as are most of the short stories used as examples in this essay.) Forster's story ends this way: "... I saw that he was my brother." O'Flaherty's ends, "Then the sniper ... looked into his brother's face."

Students can also attempt to rewrite the author's version of a portion of a short story, converting a brief episode from narrative summary to dramatic scene. For example, Hurst in "The Scarlet Ibis" uses narrative summary to relate the episode in which, after the drought-breaking hurricane wrenches the cotton bolls from the stalk, Daddy, along with Doodle and the narrator-brother, examines the damage and breaks forth in a string of curses against "heaven, hell, the weather, and the Republican Party." Student readers have fun converting that bit of narrative summary to dramatic scene — replete with appropriate dialogue. Similarly, student readers gain insight into the techniques of story telling when they change to narrative summary a later episode in Hurst's story — the dramatic scene involving Daddy, Mama, and the two brothers at lunch when the scarlet ibis lands outside in the bleeding tree. The key point for students to see is what the writer gains or loses by using either narrative summary or dramatic scene. As a more demanding version of this "what ... if" strategy, I delete one episode, either narrative summary or dramatic scene, from the middle of a short story and ask students, after they have read the story minus the deletion, to supply the missing scene.

Another of my favorite "what ... if" techniques I have borrowed from Laurence Perrine, who has students rewrite Aesop's fables utilizing various points of view. I find Perrine's strategy, using either fables or short stories, a first-rate activity for developing student understanding of point of view. After I have had students try to see the same event from the perspectives of two or three characters in the story, or from the view of someone outside the events of the story, student readers have said, "For the first time, all this business about omniscient, limited omniscient, objective, and first person makes sense." (For full details of Perrine's approach, see *Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, pp. 174-180.)

For another of the "what...if" strategies I have adapted the cloze technique from reading comprehension testing — the procedure that involves having the person being tested supply words which have been systematically deleted from a text. To explore elements of style and tone with student readers, I give them a passage with key words omitted, and ask them to supply appropriate ones. If students are unfamiliar with Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," I delete some or most of these words from the first four sentences of that story (the number of deletions is dependent upon the ability level of the class): *soundless, dreary, shades, melancholy, insufferable, unrelieved, sternest, bleak, eye-like, decayed, earthy, and hideous*. As we consider the particular effects produced by the words class members suggest to complete the passage, the student readers learn much about such dimensions of language as denotation and connotation, and move closer to an awareness of fiction's power to give *felt* insights — truths conveyed through our feelings.

As a less-demanding version of this strategy, I use the opening paragraph of Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis" and delete just four words: *bleeding, rotting, untenanted, and graveyard*. After the class has read the story, reacted to it and analyzed it, I engage them in the cloze activity, from which emerges a sense of how Hurst's paragraph not only sets a tone for the story but prefigures its events and theme. As an alternate activity, I delete from a short story all the verbs except *said* that the author has used to ascribe dialogue to characters. Then I ask students to furnish suitable verbs, excluding *said*, of course. This activity sends some students to their copies of Roget's *Thesaurus*. More importantly, student readers begin to see that most short story writers rely on the rather neutral *said* to ascribe dialogue except when they want to produce a special effect; then they turn to *chattered, blurted out, ranted, protested, swore, insisted*, to mention only a few possibilities.

I have also blocked out the key similes or other figures of speech in copies of a short story and then asked students to generate effective ones. For example, in Wallace Stegner's "The Colt," I delete three similes, including the one describing the young boy as he crouches, in fear of his father, between the neighbor and his mother, watching from the narrow space "like a gopher from his hole." This simile and the other two (the boy neck-deep in luggage packed in the back of his parents' wagon looking "like a baby owl in a nest" and the colt with bent pasterns hobbling along "like the little crippled boy in the Pied Piper") are wholly appropriate to the rural environment of the young boy and evolve from his

youthful experiences. This appropriateness of the figurative language to the situation is what I want students to sense as we discuss the similes they have written.

Without question, there are additional "what . . . if" strategies to use with your students as you explore with them one of my favorite literary realms — the vast expanse of short fiction. In the process, you may well add another short story to your list of favorites, and, more importantly, student readers will begin to build theirs.

Oral Interpretation in the Fiction Class

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TIME: 8:30 a.m.

PLACE: A classroom at Danville Area Community College

SCENE: David Brosi, instructor in Introduction to Fiction, is preparing to teach Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." He has re-read his notes; he has skimmed the text again quickly, and he has his interpreters in place. His interpreters?

At the front of the room Barbara Stover and Ilva Walker sit on two bar stools with music stands in front of them. Mr. Brosi introduces the two speech instructors at the college; he asks his class not to follow the story in the text but to close their books. On the previous class day he told his class they could read the story before the presentation, or they could wait until afterwards. It was their choice.

This particular story is a favorite of all three of us instructors. It has characters that are a special joy for my colleagues from the speech staff. Ms. Stover takes the roles of the grandmother and the mother; Ms. Walker is the Misfit, the son and the two children who have brief lines in the car. And it has layers of symbolism, a shifting emotional tone, and a distinguished writing style for me to discuss as a teacher of fiction. Especially in "A Good Man . . .," the oral interpretation offered by Walker and Stover makes students increasingly aware of the author's style and organization. Immediately after the presentation students often remark that the shift in emotional tone is even more apparent to them

than in their silent reading of the text. The distance between narrator and characters is likewise emphasized, and changes in characters' actions crystalize as their speech is heard.

Ms. Walker has cut the story to thirty minutes, an optimum time for such presentations. Expository material is pared to a skeleton. Some indirect quotations have been rewritten as dialog since all three of us feel the characterizations are the most important quality of the interpretation. Some minor characters' speeches have been written out completely in order to keep attention on the primary characters. Students can read description and exposition with little problem in conception. It is the characters that the interpreters must make live.

To the purists out there who are recoiling at the printed text's being altered, defamed, sliced, edited and desecrated, it is Ms. Walker's firm opinion that when one changes the medium, one has to change the form. The writer can't do what the oral reader can. The writer must use a paragraph describing the detached aloofness of the Misfit's actions and speeches; the oral interpreter does it with voice, speech rhythms and intensity. The interpreters do not, repeat NOT, merely read the text out loud.

The interpreter gives sound to the literature, too. In "A Good Man..." for instance, not only do Stover and Walker give the dialog a soft, southern dialect, but they use the dialect in the expository passages about any of the characters' actions. (They drop it when describing the auto accident, the Misfit's car moving slowly until it stops, and the eventual killing of the occupants.) Jargon and regionalisms need to be heard: "I don't reckon he meant to talk to you thataway." "I pre-chate that." "I'll look and see terrectly." "Hep the lady up, Hiram." "...if you hadn't reckernized me," "oncet," "attackted."

Ms. Walker picked up on the word "dreamily" from O'Connor's text as the clue to the Misfit's manner of speaking, so that in the final scene the grandmother and the Misfit are not really talking to each other; they are speaking parallel to one another. The entire scene is done *in toto* of course, as every word is crucial and telling. One of the most effective moments in the presentation occurs when Bailey is led away to be shot and the grandmother shrieks, "Bailey, boy, Bailey boy" followed immediately by the Misfit's quiet, laid back rambling monolog, "I was a gospel singer for awhile. . . ." The contrast is startling.

In the class discussion after the presentation, students may question either reader as to interpretation, selection of material, etc. Generally the students who have read the text have thought of the Misfit as inhuman and completely unsympathetic. After the

interpretation they realize he can also be pitied. They have heard the shrill, nagging grandmother, a silly woman on the printed page, become a self-deluder. They have laughed when she said, "I believe I've injured an organ" and they've flinched when the Misfit "sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times — through the chest." Our discussion of character, motivation, foreshadowing, symbolism, denouement and resolution becomes an emotional response to two of life's losers.

Another of the short stories Ms. Stover and Walker do for my fiction class is Steinbeck's "Chrysanthemums." Originally Ms. Walker read Lisa and Ms. Stover read the peddler. They switched roles after the first couple of readings and I noted that Ms. Walker's interpretation of "Lisa" put greater emphasis on her pain and longing; Ms. Stover's "Lisa" was more settled and strong, both presentations being equally valid of course. The two interpretations give me a head start when I ask students to support their feelings about this character.

I also incorporate into this course fine adaptations of fiction on film and videotape. Students respond favorably to this practice, as might be expected. But by the end of the semester students most often say the live performance, the interpreter's reading, was the most memorable activity of the semester. It is the students' decision that the interpreters are more true to the author's intent than the film; they feel the film can often be both overwhelming and simplistic while the reading gives the audience the benefit of alternate interpretations.

I have had students in different semesters explain that the oral interpretation had helped them "image" short stories better, including "Good Man." "Imagism" had been introduced to these classes, but "imaging" seemed to be at best indirectly related to classroom discussion. I offer the speculation that the term might have come from discussions of high fidelity music systems. In the present literary context, however, "imaging" means an increased awareness and mastery of the work. Being involved as an audience member during one of Ms. Stover and Ms. Walker's presentations obviously makes the story more accessible and immediate to most students. Perhaps these, too, are attributes of imaging.

Reading aloud is a teaching tool long honored by educators. The elementary teacher reads "Winnie the Pooh" to her first graders and the children wiggle their noses as Pooh tries to get the fly off while holding onto the balloon. Afterwards, the children stand in line to check out the Milne book and read it for themselves. Ms. Stover and Walker have done over five hundred programs for

elementary children in the Danville schools and the comment most often heard from teachers is, "After you've read the story to them, they want to read it for themselves." So what's the difference between Milne with first graders and O'Connor and Steinbeck with college freshmen?

For teachers who have never had experience with oral interpretation of literature, my associates and I recommend the following books, which have sections on cutting narrative prose:

Sessions, Virgil D., Holland, Jack B., *Your Role in Oral Interpretation*, 2nd ed., Boston: Holbrook Press, 1975.

Lee, Charlotte I., Gura, Timothy, *Oral Interpretation*, 6th ed., Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1982.

Gottlieb, Marvin, *Oral Interpretation*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980.

Gilbert, Carolyn A., *Communicative Performance of Literature*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1977.

Two other excellent interpretation books are:

Bacon, Wallace A., *The Art of Interpretation*, 3rd ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979.

Maclay, Joanna, Sloan, Thomas, *Interpretation*, New York: Random House, 1972.

We also want to recommend the following short stories as particularly good material for oral interpretation:

Sherwood Anderson's "I Want to Know Why"

Arna Bontemps' "A Summer Tragedy"

Kay Boyle's "Astronomer's Wife"

Ray Bradbury's "I See You Never"

Stephen Crane's "A Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"

William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"

Langston Hughes' "Rock, Church"

D. H. Lawrence's "Tickets, Please"

Carson McCullers' "A Domestic Dilemma"

Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge"

Tillie Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle"

Katherine Ann Porter's "Theft"

J. D. Salinger's "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes"

J. D. Salinger's "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut"

Irvin Shaw's "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses"

Eudora Welty's "A Piece of News"

Value Analysis: An Approach to Teaching Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"

GARY W. STREIT

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KANKAKEE

It has long been acknowledged that literature in general and the short story in particular offer statements about values. At present there is in some schools an effort to connect the study of literature to a study of morality and values. This means going beyond analysis of a work — in terms of its plot, characterization, point of view, theme and imagery — to an evaluation of the moral issues arising from these literary elements.

I have used the following process of analysis, applied to William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," and I recommend it to anyone wanting to determine the qualitative value content of short fiction.

The first step a teacher must take before using this approach is to become functionally familiar with value categories which can be applied to the short story. I have used successfully those presented by Harry S. Broudy in his book, *Building a Philosophy of Education* (Prentice-Hall). His classification, which follows, offers a scheme which may be applied quite easily to fiction. His categories are:

Economic Values. An object has economic value if it commands a money price. It is a commonplace that we do not value money or material things for their own sake, but rather for the enjoyments they make possible. Economic value is instrumental rather than intrinsic, although the miser may get a genuine and perhaps unique satisfaction from the mere handling of his money.

Health, Bodily, and Recreational Values. Under this heading we shall include the values of health or physical well-being, play and all the satisfactions that come from the gratification of bodily needs, such as hunger, thirst, rest, and sex.

Social Values. The satisfactions we get from friendship, love, family, and membership in groups are to be included in the social values.

Moral Values. These are the satisfactions and dissatisfactions that accrue to the individual in the course of his attempts to make right choices.

Aesthetic Values. Perceived objects to which the adjectives beautiful and ugly are relevant give rise in the observer to the kind of experience we call aesthetic.

Intellectual Values. We prize or get satisfaction from attaining truth in any of its forms. We say that an object or action has intellectual value if it in some way helps or hinders the finding of truth.

Religious Values. If an object by virtue of its relation to the Divine can be called holy or sacred, it is said to have a religious value, and the experience of such objects as sacred or divine is called a religious experience.

Teachers might want to construct their own scheme for a values analysis or they might find other readymade categories similar to those of Broudy. I offer the following analysis of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," in the hope that it may serve as an example of what may be done with this approach.

Economic Values in "A Rose . . ."

Economic values do not dominate the story, but there is an interesting generational clash between the earlier era of chivalry and the more bureaucratic period which followed. Miss Emily was left impoverished by her father so that she would have been unable to pay her town taxes. In 1894, "Colonel Sartoris, the mayor—he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron—remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity." Because it was deemed inappropriate for a gentlewoman to receive charity, Colonel Sartoris invented "an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying." However, the colonel apparently left no permanent record of the "transaction."

When the "next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction." The new breed of administrators attempted to collect her taxes by the usual legal means, but were utterly defeated and eventually had to give up the struggle to force Miss Emily to pay.

In the contrast between the easygoing, human economics of the 1890's and the more rigid, bureaucratic period which followed, it is modern economic man who is made to appear ridiculous.

Health, Bodily, and Recreational Values

The importance of these values is underlined by their absence in Miss Emily's life. She lived alone in a house that "smelled of

dust and disuse — a close, dank smell." The sunlight touched her no more than it did her house; "She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue." She never went out, except for the brief period when she was being courted by Homer Barron. Miss Emily was largely bereft of all the satisfactions that come from the gratification of bodily needs, and she turned into a monstrosity.

Social Values

Social values play an important part in the development of the story. The decision by Colonel Sartoris to remit Miss Emily's taxes was based on the apparent rationale that a member of the "aristocracy" of a small Southern community could not be allowed to become completely destitute. She had to be rescued from her predicament without making it appear that she was the recipient of charity.

This finesse was missing in the affair of Miss Emily and Homer Barron. The whole town, forgetting that any love she might have known had been driven off by her father during his lifetime, was outraged when she began to keep company with a day laborer. Whether or not Miss Emily could find happiness with Homer was immaterial; "... some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people." The Baptist minister was induced to intervene, unsuccessfully. The opposition to the relationship was based on social distinctions deemed important by the ladies of the town. Homer Barron was a Northerner, a day laborer, and was thought to like young men. That Miss Emily was dying inwardly for lack of love was immaterial to her neighbors.

Moral Values

Colonel Sartoris' decision to help Miss Emily is the only really moral action in the story. The townspeople who believed that Miss Emily's romance was immoral were interested in social values rather than in morality. Homer Barron's motives are never clarified, but he was apparently "toying with Miss Emily's affections." Even if this is so, he was made to pay too heavy a price for his trifling, for Miss Emily murdered him to keep him close to her forever. In the insane world of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, the usual moral code does not apply.

The only moral person in the story, other than Colonel Sartoris, is the Negro Thomas, who took care of Miss Emily until her death. He must have done so out of a sense of duty and loyalty because

she could not have paid him much, if anything, and she had nothing to leave him. At the funeral, "he walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again," so that he did not even wait to see whether she had remembered him in her will.

The others live by standards of morality that place the emphasis on outward appearance.

Aesthetic Values

The action and atmosphere of the story are enhanced by descriptions of the ugliness of Miss Emily, her servant, and her milieu. The squalor is summed up in her death: "And so she died. Fell ill in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a doddering Negro man to wait on her." Moreover, her only real companion had been the moldering skeleton of her slain "lover," Homer Barron.

However, Miss Emily must have had an eye for beauty at one time in the past, for she gave local children lessons in china painting.

Intellectual Values

No one in the story places great store on intellectual values. People in the town are curious about Miss Emily's liaison with the Yankee, but no one has the intellectual curiosity to work out the truth of his death. There are enough clues to alert them, including his sudden disappearance after her purchase of arsenic and the horrible smell that permeates her house and the neighborhood. Perhaps they lack the courage to face the consequences of any suspicions they might reasonably have entertained.

Religious Values

Religion is another case of outward show without inner meaning. The reader is told that "the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her for china painting lessons with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five cent piece for the collection plate." The churches were also useful for policing morality, as when the minister's wife intervened with Miss Emily's cousins in the Homer Barron affair.

Concluding Observations

Whenever I have used the value analysis approach in classroom study of the short story, I have tried to distinguish among three major components: (1) the values seemingly contained in the

literary work itself, (2) my own personal values, and (3) the values of my students. The blending of these three eventually yields a result which will in whole be qualitatively more than simply the sum of its parts.

The teacher who chooses to examine short stories from a values perspective must remain flexible and open, avoiding any temptation to offer a rigid and dogmatically presented pre-set image of values. The students must, above all, be allowed to take an active role in their own exploration and development of values, rather than being mere passive recipients in this process. It falls to the teacher to keep students both motivated and interested, a task which calls for creativity. I have found, however, that this approach to the short story is well worth the effort.

If Mankind Perished Utterly: Teaching Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains"

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We read to discover our truest selves. We read to know our past and to anticipate our future. Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" is a short story, atypical in several respects, whose uniqueness immediately sparks student involvement and questioning concerning themselves and the world in which they live. That no human characters live in this futuristic tale forces each reader to examine Bradbury's story carefully. We are introduced to an empty, highly automated house located in Allendale, California. The mechanical voice-clock of the house sings out the date—August 4, 2026—and periodically, in melodic tones, announces the time and any family duties appropriate to that moment. "Eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one!"

No one, however, responds to the voice-clock because no people are there. A quick survey of the premises reveals breakfasts being prepared mechanically, cleaning being done by a scurrying horde of mechanical mice, the entire house being set in order for the operations of the day—all in a most efficient and automatic manner. No people are present because the ultimate holocaust has oc-

curred; Allendale is a city of rubble and nuclear ash that glows radioactively at night. In the entire city, only this one building, the McClellan's home, survives among the ruins. It is an empty edifice of man's ingenuity, functioning in a void. The building exists, a living entity as personified by Bradbury, responding on schedule, reacting to external and internal stimuli, seemingly making decisions in a practical and personal manner. The house animates the nursery walls with a jungle of cavorting blue lions, pink antelope, and lilac panthers; it mixes martinis, lights cigars, prepares bridge tables, and selects favorite bedtime readings. It is a happy house, content and self-satisfied in the security of its suburban setting; yet, finally, it remains only a fancy machine without conscious awareness.

What makes this story so successful in the classroom is its deceptiveness. Subtly, sneaking up on us as he does it, Bradbury presents the tragedy of our times. He shows us the horror of the holocaust that will accompany the next nuclear war. The ruse begins with pastoral descriptions and lyrical tones. A softness, an efficiency, a beauty fill his portrait. "The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness." The language is inviting in its texture; the image, beautifully pleasing in its familiarity. Students warm to the author's style. Then in quick counterpoint, balanced against our sense of delight in the lyrical tone of his description, emerge unexpected and harsh ironies. "The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned evenly free of its white paint . . . save for five places." We are shown the instant of time in which the tragedy occurred. "Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn, . . . a woman bent to pick flowers, . . . a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball; and opposite him a girl's hands raised to catch a ball which never came down."

As the young reader realizes the implications of the scene, the instant becomes unacceptably horrible.

"It wouldn't happen like that, would it, Mr. Deines?" They look to me for reassurance. I give them a tight-lipped nod confirming their apprehension.

"That's just what happened in Japan in 1945."

We begin talking about realities, history, and John Hersey's *Hiroshima*.

"How come the ball is still in mid-air?" Their voices are acquiring uncertain tones of skepticism.

We speak about the swiftness of the Weapon and the quickness of death. We examine how Bradbury extrapolated from the real

silhouettes of human figures pressed upon granite steps and the Japanese painter astride his ladder propped against a Hiroshima wall. Nearly forty years later they are still there.

"Soft Rains" takes hold of our discussion again, and my students return, perhaps with misgivings, to the story. At "twelve noon" Bradbury's chicanery continues. The family dog returns home, whining and shivering, is recognized and admitted to the house. The dog has "gone to bone and (is) covered with sores." Angry mice stream forward, fastidiously cleaning up after the mud-covered dog. The hysterical animal yelps its way through the house seeking companionship at each doorway. In the kitchen the stove is mechanically producing mounds of pancakes covered with maple syrup. Unable to find its master or break into the kitchen, the dog froths at the mouth, runs wildly in circles, bites its tail, spins in a frenzy, and dies. Two hours later the mice sense the heap of decay and within fifteen minutes all traces of the animal are gone in a whirl of sparks up the incinerator chimney.

"That's gross, Mr. Deines! That dog was sickening!"

"If that part of the story is so repulsive, why do you think Bradbury showed us 'Man's best friend,' the only living creature in the story, in such a disgusting and ugly fashion?"

Again we leave the story, this time to discover radiation poisoning, surviving the blast, and being alone. We try to imagine our own actions and reactions. Heroics, cowardice, survival, blind futility, and the slow death from fallout's soft rains—all are examined and weighed.

Sometimes emotions run high. They resist the facts. Our discussion moves from literature to life. Numbed by their own disbelief and the idea that fears they had been tendering somewhere in their subconscious minds might actually be truths, they still want to know more about what really could happen. We bludgeon each other with all the facts we can muster. Often, they administer their own most poignant punches. They ask questions that have been lurking in shadowy recesses of concern for years.

We map out Chicago, locate probable targets, and draw rings of destruction. *The Chicago Tribune* did a feature on this topic a couple of years ago that many of them remember.

We consider the impact weapons of various megaton sizes would have upon our metropolitan area.

We discuss the philosophical implications of neutron bombs, weapons which destroy life but preserve buildings.

We search out safe places, escape routes, and shelters; we discover chaos, catastrophe, and confusion.

We debate whether it's better to be a survivor or an immediate victim.

We wonder how hospitals, burn units, paramedics, fire departments, and all the emergency survival services could possibly provide for the overwhelming, instantaneous public need.

We learn that some military studies would consider a 20 per cent immediate loss of American lives *light* and that those same officials predict that we could win the war that followed such a disaster.

We ask ourselves, silently, if there would even be time to run home to be with our families, and we know we would probably never see them again.

Usually the conversation mushrooms into a multitude of related topics. Somebody knows about nuclear half-lives for radioactive materials. Another person wants to know about the China syndrome, Three Mile Island, waste disposal dump sites in Illinois, or the interstate transportation of radioactive waste material. Someone else turns our attention to SALT talks, stockpiling bombs, MERV warheads, or, perhaps, laser tracking systems from satellites which can now assure absolute accuracy for missile trajectories anywhere in the world. One person inevitably asks, "How many times can we completely blow up Earth these days?"

They go on until exhaustion overtakes them. I let them run. They need to voice their questions, their disbelief, their frustration. They need to probe for hope and concern, unanimity and answers. They have to believe that their voices can become the beginning of change.

Then, finally, there comes a pause in our discussion. Their minds whirling, their eyes dazed or angry — we turn back to the literature, to the poem by Sara Teasdale from which Bradbury took the story's title "There Will Come Soft Rains." It is a gentle poem, quiet and powerful, that ends with the lines:

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

If this final, mocking irony in Man's total demise and relative insignificance has escaped the students' previous perception, the poem takes them to awareness.

"At ten o'clock the house began to die." Bradbury concludes the story with an accidental fire raging through the house. The crema-

tion is done in quick-paced personification. The fire is a ravenous, uncaring creature. "It fed upon Picassos and Matisse in the hallway, . . . delicacies. . . It lay in beds, stood in windows, . . . felt the clothes hanging in closets, . . . was clever." The house succumbs. It "shuddered oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wires, its nerves revealed . . . quivered in the scalded air." At dawn a single wall stands among the steaming ruins, silhouetted against the horizon like a huge tombstone. A last voice intones the epitaph over and over, "Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is . . ."

The pendulum of experience swings from one generation's experiences to the next. We're teaching young kids today who believe in the attitudes of John Wayne wars or Clint Eastwood wars more readily than Viet Nam and napalm. They have grown up since the sixties, not during them. Theirs is a synthetic experience. All of their wars—World Wars and Star Wars—occur on screens where they can recreate battles and regenerate people again and again merely with the flick of a switch. But, that experience does not approach reality. Science fiction is often maligned as a story form which wallows in doomsday prophecies. Good science fiction, like all good fiction, is not prophetic so much as purposeful. It wants to deter us from foolish ways. The best science fiction not only is purposeful, it is artistic and clever and lingers with us—a warning, of course, as to what we might become, but also, more hopefully, a reminder of what we might choose to be. "Soft Rains" challenges young students to confront both alternatives within their truest selves and make a choice.

Short Stories as Writing Models

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Like most English teachers, I believe that reading influences writing. In my freshman English course at Western Illinois University, I have taken this commonly held idea just one step further: I believe that reading and writing should be taught simultaneously. Since both a reader and a rhetoric text are strongly suggested for classroom use in Composition 102, many teachers switch back and forth between alternating lessons on literature and composition. I feel that the most successful way to teach the short story in such a

course is by somehow relating it to writing. The activity that worked best for me was to have my students copy the style of the short story writers represented in their reader.

When I first told the class of my objective, students looked at me (as freshmen are known for doing) with disbelief, incomprehension and suspicion. How can a college freshman copy the style of a famous writer? It is simpler than they thought. . . .

Up to that time, my students had been having difficulty writing truthfully; that is, they were giving me "what the teacher wants." But what the teacher got was not what she wanted at all. Their writing was dull and lifeless. They were using what Ken Macrorie calls "Engfish," — "a language in which fresh truth is almost impossible to express." In his book, *Uptaught*, Macrorie cites a typical example of typical student literary criticism in English: "I found the characters in this story very interesting. The plot was exciting and an outstanding aspect of the story was its description." What English teacher with senses still intact would want such garbage?

So I set about my task of bringing life to writing through the use of short stories as models. I first found two examples of life-filled descriptive writing: "North Beach" by Maya Angelou and "He Don't Plant Cotton" by J. F. Powers. Although the students had their own copies of the stories, I still dittoed off these portions so they could see exactly what I wanted from them:

From "North Beach":

I counted three and walked slowly down the aisle and onto the stage. I stood still as I had at rehearsal, and a dead calm surrounded me. One second later fear plummeted to my stomach and made my knees weak. I realized that I could not see the people. No one had warned me that a combination of spotlights and nerves would cause blindness. The aisle down which I had walked still lay open and unobstructed. I looked at it once, longingly, then turned to the pianist and nodded. And although I did not know it, another career had begun.

From "He Don't Plant Cotton":

Spring entered the black belt in ashes, dust, and drabness, without benefit of the saving green. The seasons were known only by the thermometer and the clothing of the people. There were only a few nights in the whole year when the air itself told you. Perhaps a night in April or May might escape the plague of smells, achieve a little of the enchantment, be the diminished echo of spring happening ardently in the suburbs, but it was all over in a night and the streets were filled with summer, as a hollow mouth with bad breath, and even the rain could not wash it away.

The beginning snow swirled in from the lake, dusting the streets with white. Baby squinted down the lonesome tracks.

The wind twisted snow into his eyes, the flakes as sharp as sand, grinding, and his eyeballs were coated with cold tears. Baby worked his hands in his overcoat pockets to make heat. He saw a woman cross the street to catch the Big Red, which was coming down the tracks ahead. Baby got on. The conductor held out one hand for the fare and yanked a cord twice with the other, prodding the red monster into motion.

Since by that time in the semester, the class had studied the elements of good writing in other authors, they knew what was good and what wasn't. Based on what they had learned, I had them point out the ways in which each of the dittoed passages succeeded. They pointed out such things as: *descriptive adjectives* — "dead calm," "open and unobstructed," "ashes, dust and drabness," "savage green," "diminished echo," "ardently," "hollow mouth with bad breath," and "flakes sharp as sand"; *descriptive verbs* — "plummeted," "swirled," "dusting," "prodding"; *brief, emphatic sentences* — in Angelou and *longer sentences whose clauses build upon each other* in Powers, and a *definite sense of ending*.

Why can't freshman composition students write with the same vividness and style? They can. My next step was to convince them that they could. Their assignment was to think of the most distressing situation they had ever been in — then, to describe it, following Andelou's style as closely as possible without actually plagiarizing. Thinking of and re-living an actual situation clarifies it in the mind, so that it's easier to put on paper. The better descriptions I dittoed off and passed out to the class as examples. Here are a few of those:

The big game was finally here. It was the last game of the season, the game that would make the champions. A strong, crisp, and nipping breeze chilled the air. Banners whipped in the wind as anxious fans awaited the moment of kick-off. These fans, bundled to an absolute maximum to warm their bodies, needed nothing to warm their hearts. A feeling of undying pride and excitement shown from every face in the crowd as they waited for teams to appear on the field. Seeing the seniors leading the pack brought a feeling of sorrow to many; for the seniors it was the last game of the last season.

Dragging myself up the stairs, I felt like a fish being reeled in from the waters. The feeling got even worse as I reached the top stair. Instead of the hook luring me in from my mouth, I felt the yank in my heart. At this point it dawned on me that the heavy thumps of my heart, the weakening in my stomach and sudden loss of breath weren't because I feared that my name wasn't on the list. I knew that I hadn't made the baseball team and I didn't need proof.

My hands started to sweat and my mouth salivated as if I had a piece of candy and was trying to digest it.

Moths, not butterflies, invaded my stomach and my pace slowed.

The student's next assignment was to write with the same type of style as in Powers' description. Some excerpts:

The blowing sand whipped through the inside of the nomad's tent. Packing to move on, the nomad draped a shawl around his body. The sand blinded him once outside. The wind sliced against his unprotected skin as if it was a razor. His nose and mouth sucked in millions of dirty granules. Everything he touched felt as sharp as a cactus needle. Struggling furiously to mount his overloaded camel, the nomad joined a passing transit. The people of the group made no confrontations. They all remained anonymous to one another.

The beginning fear swirled in from the depths, dusting the star with hope. He squinted down the lonesome road. The wind twisted realism into his eyes, the truth as sharp as sand, grinding, and his brain was filled with cold fear. He worked his hands in his overcoat pockets to feel the remaining change. He saw a reject cross the street to catch the Big Red, which was coming down the tracks ahead. The star got on. The conductor held out one hand for the fare and pointed down the aisle, prodding the hopeful star on to fame.

The swirling, cold, gale-force winds cut through the Q-lot adventurers like a butcher's knife....The frozen sidewalks tripped up unknowing travelers like a mischievous child.

The beginning freshmen in Spring term rotate from building to building, like an object on an assembly line at a factory.

Dull, dry writing? Hardly. I had succeeded! Not only did they write for themselves instead of the teacher for the first time, but they continued to do so for the rest of the semester. In a composition class where stories are required to be read, we found a connection between reading and writing. Reading short stories taught them to write with vitality and to like it. Score one for the teacher.

The Title: A Clue to the Theme in Teaching The Short Story in Middle Schools

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Encouraging middle-school students to make a generalization about the theme of a story is probably one of the most challenging

tasks in teaching literature. Many students at this level haven't yet learned to look for the clues that an author provides. For instance, in all the years I have taught "The Gift of the Magi" to seventh-graders, not one student has ever bothered to look up *Magi* in the dictionary. But O'Henry provides a very important clue by using *Magi* in his title. When I have asked students why Keyes named his story "Flowers for Algernon" they nearly always answer, "Because Charlie puts flowers on Algernon's grave." They do not realize that the title is something more than a restatement of part of the plot.

So what to do? I have discovered that using the title as a clue to the theme helps students to read more carefully. Four short stories frequently printed in literature anthologies for the middle-school have titles with good clues. One title is a play on words — "The Most Dangerous Game." One gives a clue by referring to another story — "The Gift of the Magi." Two titles give grammatical clues that help the reader to draw a conclusion about the theme: "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "To Build A Fire."

The title of "The Most Dangerous Game" is a play on words — the two meanings of *game*. Since this story is about hunting, *game* may either be the animal or prey hunted or a pastime or contest. In the story, Rainsford is the animal hunted (the *game*) in Zoroff's dangerous contest (or game). Zoroff is the owner of the island, so he makes the rules of the game. In fact, playing the game on his private island is Zoroff's sole reason for living. He spends all his time kidnapping and fattening up sailors who come near his island so that he will have *game* for his *game*. Zoroff says he likes to hunt men because they can think. Since Rainsford can think better than most of Zoroff's prey, Rainsford kills Zoroff after escaping from the hunt. Rainsford is, indeed, Zoroff's "most dangerous game."

Students can follow a similar line of reasoning and answer questions like *How is this a criticism of hunting?* and *If a man kills another man in a society with no law, is it murder?* and *What kind of law prevails in such a society?*

O'Henry names his story "The Gift of the Magi," suggesting that the Biblical story of the wise men may be relevant to what happens in his story. By going first to the dictionary, students learn that the Magi are the three wise men who visit the Christ child in the manger. Next, by reading the first part of the book of Matthew, they learn that the Magi travelled many days, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Christ child, gifts that the baby had little use for. Students can make the connection between the Christmas gifts Jim and Della give each other and the gifts of the Magi to the Christ child. Della doesn't need combs because she

sells her hair to buy the watch chain for Jim. Jim doesn't need the watch chain because he sells his watch to buy the combs. Their gifts of love are as superfluous as gold, frankincense, and myrrh. So, the students have used a clue in the title to identify the theme of the story.

An understanding of punctuation and grammar gives a clue to "The Tell-Tale Heart" as it relates to the theme. *Tell-tale*, a compound adjective modifies *heart*; therefore, the reader concludes that a heart reports the young man's crime of murder. But *whose* heart tells? The young man says that his victim's heart beats, but the old man is dead. Using common sense, the students conclude that the young man must hear his own heart.

The title also is related to "tattle-tale," a child's term for someone who tells secrets. In this case, a clue from the title suggests that the young murderer's heart or conscience tattles. The young man's tell-tale heart is his conscience, compelling him to confess to the police. Extending these conclusions to a discussion of the theme, students can see that in this story: man's actions are monitored by his conscience or his "heart."

A title may be cryptic as in "To Build A Fire." However, the grammar gives the reader a clue. The conflict in "To Build A Fire" is between man and nature (or man and the elements). Fire is the only "element" that will save a man from freezing in the Arctic. All the other elements — cold, water, ice, and snow — are man's enemies. However, in the story, the man doesn't use fire (his one hope) in a sensible way because he is foolhardy, impatient, and lacking in imagination. London calls his character "the man," giving him no identity, so the reader feels little sympathy for him. Furthermore, London gives him no heroic qualities: the man tries to kill his dog for warmth, and he makes one foolish mistake after another. London does almost nothing to win sympathy for the man, but treats him as though he were merely a device to illustrate the consequences of underestimating the power of nature. So the man becomes a metaphor for what *not* to do in the Arctic. The cryptic infinitive phrase, "To Build A Fire" might be an aphorism for: *To build a fire would be good sense.*

Students can conclude from a discussion of this sort that the story tells us that man must be very careful if he takes chances with nature. Nature can be a formidable enemy if man is not wise and wary.

Other short stories have titles that provide clues. Faulkner's "Two Soldiers" describes a young boy and his older brother, who enlists in World War II. The younger boy wants to go to war with his brother; however, when he realizes that he must go home and

help his parents with the farm. Charlie becomes a metaphorical soldier by acting like a man. "Flowers for Algernon" has a wry message about science and scientific investigation. Charlie gives flowers to Algernon when he dies, but no one gives flowers—a symbol of love and respect—to Charlie when his intelligence "dies." A question of who uses force in Williams' "A Show of Force" shows struggle to see her throat. A discussion of which character uses the force in order to "win" helps the students to see the theme of the story.

Since middle-school students have not been used to thinking about an author's choices, they don't usually consider a story as something "made." They seldom think about the author as someone who has fashioned a story from imagination, thereby making choices. One of the most obvious choices that an author makes is in the title, so teaching students to look for the clue in the title may help them to look for other clues in the text. This approach to using clues for identifying the theme works for novels, plays and poems also. After studying a short story unit like this one, my seventh-graders were very proud of themselves when they had found all the evidence on my question "Why did Harper Lee name her novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*?" I am confident that they will be prepared for a similar question after they finish reading *You Can't Take It With You*.

On Teaching the Short Story in Prison

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Some articles suggest that teaching in prison is an almost transcendent experience. But many instructors who try prison teaching find the experience rewarding but stressful. When criticizing an inmate's work, a teacher is often face-to-face with someone who has bludgeoned people for lesser transgressions. I have friends teaching in inner-city schools, however, who claim that many of their students demonstrate the same characteristics as the prisoners—they are often hostile, uncooperative and extremely self-centered. Thus, I offer my suggestions for teaching the short story in prison in the hope that my practical advice might be useful even to those who never work within such a setting.

A positive side of prisoners' self-centeredness is their readiness to read fiction about their ethnic experience. You will need to choose stories according to the ethnic make-up of your pupils. Once they have seen their group dramatized, they are ready to see comparable aspects in other ethnic groups. To do this, I advise you to use the theme of initiation but not until you have read several stories. Be careful to point out that each group has its unique features, but also that each group has things in common with all other groups. If you build up to this point carefully before you introduce the concept, they will already have internalized all the examples you need to make your case. From my experience, you can make this theme of universally shared experience acceptable even to members of the Nazi Brotherhood. Once you have established the integrity of each ethnic literature, you might want to try to get each group to concede a second point: that its literature is not necessarily better than the literature of another group. For example, the WASPS should see that Hemingway and Crane are not necessarily good writers just because these authors speak to WASP experience. If you can accomplish the first and second point, you might want to go on to demonstrate a third point: that a student can't claim that a story is good or bad just because he likes or dislikes it.

Make these points in the order listed above, and proceed inductively. That is, do not announce your point and then defend it; rather, spend a few weeks getting across the supporting evidence you will later need to make the point. This evidence should not be the main point of your lessons; rather, subordinate this evidence as information mixed in with the rest of the course. Then review that information and present the ineluctable conclusion. Prison students are often awed by such a logical approach to building a case, partly because they sincerely respect successful rhetorical manipulation. On the other hand, be careful not to threaten anyone's identity, or you will have incurred a dangerous ambivalence between their respect for intelligence on the one hand, and, on the other, their world view and sense of self. Such a crisis can result in an outburst of denial in which the student must negate either the instructor or himself.

What kind of reader response can you expect? One clearly based on the student's experience. Regular students might try to find the meaning not in what their experience would lead them to find in the text but what they think the teacher would find. But few in prison are sufficiently cowed to give the teacher only what the student thinks the teacher wants. In addition, prison students seem to be better at focusing closely on the text itself. For me, one of the

most rewarding aspects of teaching inmates is that they find things in the stories that I've missed. They actually help me to read the text. They are also good not only at ferreting out evidence but also at suggesting its significance. I suspect an inmate develops this skill by constantly reviewing his case in the hope of convincing a court of a new reading.

What should your class sessions be like? First of all, you should probably not lecture too much. If you lecture extensively, students will be frustrated because one of the reasons many of them enroll is to express themselves. Walking into each session, you should know what you want to say, and walking out you should have it said. But work that material in as the class meeting takes its course.

Inmates want praise and chafe against criticism, but you should meet this need not by rewarding mediocrity but by giving them something they can master. As John N. Cable claims in his article, "Reflections of a Prison Professor," in *(Improving College and University Teaching*, 26, 1978, p. 83), they want praise, but they do not want something for nothing. They have no respect for a pushover, but you will not impress them by being arrogantly headstrong — that is their game, and they will beat you at it.

Literary history is one of my interests, but it is not one of theirs; the only thing they might dislike more is the study of diction and syntax. Prison professors soon realize that inmates do not care much for literary history per se, not even for esthetic excellence. So you might want to start with the theme of a story. I think this approach works well for those students who need to express their views, to unburden themselves. There are two ways to proceed here: start with either a simple story whose theme is obvious, or one that is so open-ended that you can applaud almost any reading. In the first category, I have used "Big Blonde" by Dorothy Parker and "One Off the Short List" by Doris Lessing (though neither is unsubtle or uncontroversial). In the second category, I have used "The Demon Lover" by Elizabeth Bowen and let the students argue whether this is a story of mimesis, neurosis, or dream.

Here is a list of themes the students will probably like. Heading the list are sex and violence, suggesting that prisoners are not so different from the rest of society.

AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

- Ray Bradbury, "The Sound of Thunder"
- Richard Connell, "The Most Dangerous Game"
- Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel"
- Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"

Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"
 Frank O'Connor, "Guests of the Nation"
 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

MALE-FEMALE

Elizabeth Bowen, "The Demon Lover"
 Kay Boyle, "The Astronomer's Wife"
 Doris Lessing, "One Off the Short List"
 Dorothy Parker, "Big Blonde"
 James Thurber, "The Catbird Seat"

ALIENATION

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"
 Kate Chopin, "Beyond the Bayou"
 D. H. Lawrence, "The Odour of Chrysanthemums"
 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
 Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

INITIATION

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"
 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
 Carson McCullers, "A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud"
 Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger"
 John Updike, "A & P"

HUMAN NATURE

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
 Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"
 D. H. Lawrence, "The Rocking Horse Winner"
 Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger"
 Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"
 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel"
 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
 Frank O'Connor, "Guests of the Nation"
 Philip Roth, "Defender of the Faith"

To meet the interests of your students, you will probably have to supplement whatever anthology you choose. Most anthologies do not have much by Native Americans or Chicanos.

However, I prefer to start not with theme but with the basic elements of fiction. I think that analysis of fiction stays superficial unless you use the elements as ways into a story (but I do not mean to suggest that fiction has no meaning to a reader without this formal approach). I suggest you start with two elements: plot (including action, kinds of conflict, climax, and resolution) and character (including flat and round, and protagonist and antagonist). Spreading the elements out over a few weeks, you might want to take up the rest of them in this order: point of view, setting, allegory, symbol, irony, and language. In other words, do not spend the first two weeks building an elaborate model of literary analysis and then ask the inmates to apply it. Rather, it is better to introduce the elements gradually as you read more and more stories, pointing out the role of the new elements in stories you have already read. This technique works best if you can use the new element to suggest an answer or resolution to an interpretive problem raised in earlier discussions. On the other hand, do not leave the first few stories with too little explanation, or else the students will feel the reading to be futile and indeterminate because prison students usually want closure, want ambiguity resolved. This cumulative reference to earlier stories also provides an ongoing review of the elements, a review they need if they are to remember and use, say, the kinds of conflict, character and point of view.

Use the elements not to deflect experiential reading into glib jargon but to give a sense of mastery. Inmates like to analyze point of view, conflict, and character, but they do not like to analyze language, so leave the worst for last, and maybe even skip it.

Here is a list of elements and some stories I think are good for revealing those elements.

PLOT Conflict is something every prisoner understands.

Richard Connell, "The Most Dangerous Game"

Doris Lessing, "One Off the Short List"

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

CHARACTER Be careful not to imply that flat characters are bad. Show their function and the increasing use of round characterization for antagonists.

John Cheever, "The Country Husband"

Dorothy Parker, "Big Blonde"

Bernard Malamud, "The Magic Barrel"

POINT OF VIEW Include a discussion of the narrator's reliability.

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"
Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
John Updike, "A & P"

SETTING Simplify by calling it where and when.

Kate Chopin, "Beyond the Bayou"
Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel"
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

ALLEGORY Try approaching it as analogy.

Ray Bradbury, "The Sound of Thunder"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Celestial Railroad"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman Major Molineux"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"

SYMBOL You might simplify by defining it as something that stands for something else. This won't please structuralists and semioticians, but your students are not bound for Yale's comparative literature program.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Bosom Serpent"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Celestial Railroad"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman Major Molineux"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rapacini's Daughter"
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
Ernest Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River"

IRONY It might be good to start by saying that the two simplest kinds of irony are, first, things turning out not as planned, and second, words spoken meaning the opposite of what is said.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Celestial Railroad"
Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"
Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

STYLE Point out precision, connotation, syntax, and tone.

Ernest Hemingway, "The Killers"
Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (understatement)
Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"

A good way to start your course is with Ira Wallach's "Death Opens the Mail," a parody of the detective story. This story throws all of the elements of fiction into high relief. Students can see how

their response to the story as parody is a response to formal expectations. The sexpot is a stereotypical flat character, the protagonist is a tight-lipped, Kojakian tough-guy able to withstand and dish out inordinate violence, and the solution to the crime is wildly improbable. In short, with this story the student readily sees not only the elements but his response to them, and thereby sees why it is important to study form. Also, you can use this story to point out that the students already know what the elements are, even if they cannot name them. Such a beginning builds not only their confidence but also their foundation for analyzing all the stories they will read for the course.

As for writing assignments, the simplest one is a fill-in sheet that requires the student to identify some elements in the text. You can use such a short answer sheet for almost every story. As a record of his response to the text, it provides the student with a quick review for papers, discussion, and tests. Later, you can do a whole sheet just on one element. For example, you can do something as mundane as to list twenty or so words from the text in one column to be matched with the definitions in a second column. This kind of exercise is valuable, but do not over-emphasize it or else the students will feel they are being given busy work. A plot summary can be a good assignment, but again, do not overuse it. Keeping journals can also prove successful, especially if the student uses them to record his responses as he reads each story.

For teaching plot, or for edging students into writing their own fiction, you can have them rewrite the ending of a story. You can also give students the first part of a story up through the development of the conflict and have them finish it as they want. This assignment usually works best if students do not know the original's climax and resolution, but do not be afraid to have them rewrite an ending they have already read. For a term paper — and do not feel you must assign one — pick a topic on which the students have disagreed and argued, because that controversy stimulates them to develop their argument and to write for an audience that each of them pictures clearly in his mind's eye — the students and the teacher. Here you can rely on their competitiveness: they will anticipate their audience's objections; consequently, their arguments will be that much better. If you have a particularly able group, you might require their last paper to be a formal explication without benefit of class discussion. You might also have them write their own script — a realistic life history that includes a resolution of their incarceration. (In grading such assignments, I suggest that you act not like a proofreader, but like

someone who will help each student to revise his paper. Unless he wants it, withhold strict grading of mechanics because such things are best learned with regular writing practice.)

There are a number of options for class discussions. You will not have to worry about asking a question and getting no response. But you might have to work to get beyond superficial, prejudicial, off-the-cuff remarks. Still, your students will usually be honest about their likes and dislikes — whether about the readings or you — although it might be hard to keep the discussion on the topic.

Yet a group discussion is often workable, depending on the students. Each group should be given some project to complete and hand in before the end of class, or else they might spend the time telling war stories. To add to their motivation and self-discipline, make the group activities central to the writing projects. Consider putting the passive students in one group so they can participate without fear of interruption by one of the dominants. However, if you are unlucky enough to have rival gangs in your class, I would suggest no groups, for mixing gang members in a group could lead to violence, and segregating gangs into groups only adds to the problem.

You might also want to try panel discussions, but again do not pit one gang or race against another. And order the proceedings so they do not become a debate or contest where winning and saving face are the primary concerns. Another thing you can do is try role playing. For example, hold a mock trial in which the characters in "The Lottery" are tried for murder, part of the class on the prosecution team, part of the class defending. You play the judge and keep things from getting out of hand. You can camp your role as the authority figure and permit a little ritual castigation of yourself, but that might get hard to control.

One way to start the first discussion is this: ask a student to tell a story off the top of his head. You will get several extroverted volunteers. As he narrates, monitor his story for the basic elements. When he is done, show how the student has used setting and protagonist and point of view. This technique is good for building their confidence. But not everyone should have to do it; some would be threatened by such a task.

Media presentations can also be useful. For example, readings such as Basil Rathbone doing Poe or Hawthorne are available on records and tapes, and you may be able to show films or video cassettes. Also, TV versions of the stories you choose may be showing during the term, and many inmates have access to TV.

For example, the Public Broadcasting series on the American Short Story airs often, and all of the stories in this series are anthologized. You could build a whole course around this series. In addition, you can discuss movie versions not only of the stories read for class, but also of any other narratives that reveal the elements, themes, or myths of fiction.

In closing, I will make one more suggestion. Use humor. That is a rare commodity in prison, one that is highly valued. At the start of the first class meeting, you can use an anecdote or joke to break the ice. For example, a colleague of mine once taught English at Folsom prison, one of the hardest. To start his first class, he said, "Before we get going here I just want to thank you guys for the wonderful job you've been doing on my license plates." Frankly, I would be afraid to tell that one, for irony taken seriously can cause great misunderstanding. But I used the above joke to end my course, and the irony was obvious and appreciated because the students had learned to expect that kind of humor from me.

So prison can be a good place to teach literature, especially short stories, as long as you are not quixotic about it. But be prepared.

Needed: A Critical Approach to the Short Story in Elementary School

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Short story is an aspect of children's literature that has received little attention from the experts in this field. It is noticeable that descriptions of the short stories that are available and appropriate for children are not found in current college textbooks on children's literature. This omission occurs despite the yearly publication of extensive bibliographies of short stories for children in such sources as *The Subject Guide to Children's Books in Print and Children's Catalog*, reference tools available in most libraries.

Neither do the college texts for elementary teachers offer suggestions as to how to teach short stories that have been written for children. Suggestions for language arts programs include such genres as fantasy, biography, poetry and historical fiction but omit short story, although it is generally recognized that short prose narrative is the oldest of all literary forms. Current specialists in children's literature thus appear to distrust this literary type and to

treat it as if it were a genre too elusive, too difficult, and/or too eccentric to be suitable for children's reading fare. Such judgments of short stories are neither accurate nor reasonable.

As a matter of record, more short stories are read by today's school children than are any other kind of literature. That is, large proportions of the widely-used basal reader, with which almost all children spend about an hour a day, are made up of short stories. In fact, the short story has become the favorite offering of these ubiquitous basal readers. The length of the short story nicely satisfies the time requirement of the daily period customarily reserved for instruction in reading skills. Since the reduced range of time, place, and movement of the short story fits the needs of the reading hour, the "short-short" stories of the basal reader have long been deemed to be the preferred reading material for children learning this skill.

These stories for children are offered with the assumption that their readers will be continuously available for a specified uninterrupted period of time. They aim for their readers' unceasing attention during a short run of the clock. It is also generally held at present that this concentrated learning of reading skills is conducted best with a written content of short narrative fiction that can be utilized by the teacher to exemplify features of this literature. Short stories ably meet this criterion.

It is clear, moreover, that this emphasis on the short story in basal readers has been felicitous. Within the limits of the stories that these texts offer, the teacher can develop children's basic perceptions of narrative literature. Through their reading of short stories, youngsters learn that fiction will have an introduction, a complication, and a resolution, plus the force of causality that overshadows these elements.

It can be reasonably argued that writers of the short story need not be ashamed of dealing with subjects not dignified enough for the novelist to consider. Since all subjects are legitimate for the short story, it is often cited as the most unrestricted form of writing, the short story writer as the freest of all literary artists.

Writers of short story for children are not allowed such complete liberty, however. They must try to avoid the most common characteristics of the modern short story: the emphasis on the violent, the unpleasant, or the abnormal; the use of obsessed characters; and the shapelessness of the plot. Writers for adults can present unresolved or irrepressible problems as essentially truthful; life is that way. Writers for children, however, have learned that stories like these lack appeal for the young. A tale that resists paraphrase may reflect reality, but it is not for children.

On the contrary, a good short story for children should be one which can be summarized neatly. While it should be more than simple anecdote, short story plot for children must not be framed in abrupt sequences of action nor in episodes that stop short of some determinable significance. It is unwise, therefore, to offer children short stories that are allegorical, overly psychological, or totally reportorial, for example.

The relative shortness of the typical short story leads some to assume that its language will be, as a consequence, unusually metaphorical. Highly figurative language and the use of symbolism that often is its accompaniment are rightly thought of as advantages of the adult short story. Many of these stories are commended for their emphasis on the psychic side of their characters, on compressed statements, on the embodiment of significance at several levels of meaning, and on complex and puzzling plot structure, including flashback. None of these aspects of style are practicable, however, in short story for children.

The writer of short story for children must keep uppermost the vital aim of providing entertainment. Paramount is surface interest in a suspenseful story that can be read for enjoyment on a rather superficial level. The content of short story for children, by definition, then preferably starts exceedingly close to its climax, uses an omniscient viewpoint, and begins with sentences or dialogue that are pregnant with potential incident. A good short story for children indeed is literal in the same sense that a child's drawing of what he comprehends as reality is literal.

These restrictions on short story for children imply certain guidelines for the teaching of this literature to children. Basically, the elementary school teacher must be willing to set limits to the goals in such teaching. Then, the development of understanding in children of what the plot of the story is all about is fundamental. Accordingly, whatever foreshadowing there is in such stories must not be allowed to eliminate surprise or to reduce it appreciably (as sometimes happens in adult short story). Here foreshadowing is utilized more functionally, strictly as a preparation for all that follows in the plot. Whereas foreshadowing in the adult short story often can be subtle; in children's stories, foreshadowing serves primarily to facilitate comprehension. Above all, the child must not come to end a short story with the annoying question, "What was *that* all about?" In fact, if the short story writer for children must choose between a potential loss of suspense or a possible decrement of comprehension for the reader, the former is better.

It has been implied that the short story is apt material for the elementary school reading hour since its writers control both the number of characters a reader must deal with and the frequency of the crises that these characters will experience. These characters also are depicted to have certain acceptable personalities. Given the nature of such behavioral traits these major characters respond plausibly to those of other characters. This aspect of the basal reader short story is so well established that child readers are amazed if the action of a main character in a given story is not reasonable, plausible, and reliable. A major objective in developing perception of character with children, therefore, is to have them infer if the character in question is in fact this kind of person. While adult short story often induces its reader to contemplate the inner drives and goals of characters, the recognition of these aspects of personality by children usually are unattainable. Consequently, teachers must be satisfied if children can deal only with the surface nature of characterization.

It is said that the preferred way to teach characterization to children is to have them recall people in their everyday lives whose personalities match or contrast in certain ways with those of the literary personages under discussion. From this point the teacher can develop an awareness in children of why a given cast of characters in a short story is needed (or perhaps unneeded) to make the work function properly. Finally, the exemplification of an individual character's personality through the citation of examples of dialogue is a possible and worthwhile activity.

Point of view is a surprisingly easy literary device for children to apprehend in a short story. For example, children can readily fathom how much an author tells the reader about the characters' thought processes, and on the other hand, how much the reader must infer. Questions like "Does the author know everything that each character is thinking?" or "Does the author tell you things that the characters do not know about?" usually appeal to children and arouse satisfactory responses.

A notable aspect of short story for children the teacher is wise to approach with caution, however, is style. While children can readily distinguish in general that one short story is not written much like another, it is difficult for them to identify and discuss specific linguistic elements. It doubtless is proper that the elementary school teacher leave such matter as diction, sentence patterns and cadences, figurative language and symbolism to students in later grades. On the other hand, children can be stimulated to investigate successfully how short stories begin and end, how much dialogue

there is in contrast to description, and whether the writing is dreamy or tough, sad or merry, and the like.

In conclusion short stories for children are available and should be opened to critical examination by children. The lack of direction elementary school teachers find on this genre in standard texts on children's literature should not be interpreted to mean there is no place for systematic instruction with these stories. I hope that an inventive teacher can find use for the guidance I have offered and will fashion a useful and attractive study program on the short story. This genre is too much a part of our culture and literary heritage to be ignored.

Life in Prairie Land: The Literature of Illinois

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Is there a literature of Illinois? Of course there is. For a hundred and seventy years or so, people have been trying to capture in words, sometimes bumblingly, sometimes memorably, what it is to live in Illinois. The great themes of Illinois literature are the great themes of American literature in general: America as Eden, a place for a new start for mankind; the American character, what it is to be an Adam or an Eve in the American Eden; and of course, the Fall, the widening gap between the promise and the reality. But Illinois writers have treated these great themes in distinctively Illinois terms. They have drawn their subjects, their characters, and their imagery from the special circumstances of living in Illinois: its history, its heroes, and its geography.

Let me remind you of who the Illinois writers are. The first big block of Illinois literature takes in most of the nineteenth century, from about 1815 to about 1890. Nineteenth-century midwestern editors and critics used to lament the absence of a distinctively Western literature. Where is the great Indiana epic? they asked, the Ohio tragedy? the Illinois pastoral? The irony is that it was there all the time; they just didn't know where to look. The real literature of the West was to be found not in the mostly pallid

A speech delivered at the 1982 High School-University English Articulation Conference held at the University of Illinois.

and derivative "art literature" contributed by unsung frontier Homers and Shakespeares to the highminded literary journals of Cincinnati and Chicago, but in the tough, utilitarian writing of people actually caught up in the life of the midwest frontier. There were the travel narratives: two masterpieces from the twenty-eight or so books written to promote the English settlement at Albion in 1817, for example, are Morris Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America* and George Flower's *History of the English Settlement*. And there is Eliza Farnham's striking account of a woman's life on the Illinois frontier, *Life in Prairie Land*. There were the Illinois contributions to that favorite 19th century form, the personal memoir. Peter Cartwright's *Autobiography* and Frances Willard's *Glimpses of Fifty Years*, while hardly St. Augustine's *Confessions*, achieve vivid and complex self-characterizations of interesting people grappling with the issues of their time. And U.S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs* is one of the great American epics, so powerfully written that its very skill triggered posthumous charges of plagiarism. And there are the speeches of the great nineteenth-century Illinois orators — the impassioned speeches of the Abolitionist Owen Lovejoy, the witty and ironic addresses of the great skeptic Robert Ingersoll, and most notably of course, the luminous and poetic speeches of Abraham Lincoln.

The second phase of Illinois literature I would place between about 1890 and 1925, the period of the so-called "Chicago Renaissance," "so-called" because it was neither a strictly Chicago movement nor a renaissance. The major writers of the Renaissance were not primarily Chicago writers. Some of them, like Vachel Lindsay, didn't even live in Chicago, and many of the most memorable works of the Renaissance were not about Chicago, but about the villages the Renaissance writers came from — Davenport, Iowa; Terre Haute, Indiana; Petersburg and Springfield, Illinois; and Clyde, Ohio. And the Renaissance, strictly considered, was not so much a "rebirth" as a birth, the beginning of modern literature in America. What happened in the Chicago Renaissance was that, about 1890, there existed in Chicago both a social and cultural situation that demanded interpretation and a group of writers willing to attempt it. The first generation of Chicago writers — most notably Henry Blake Fuller, Hamlin Garland, and Robert Herrick — noted the brutality and the injustice of Chicago, but could find no weapon against it but a general estheticism, a call for "spirituality" in urban life. The second generation — Dreiser, Dell, Sandburg, Masters, Anderson — had lost all faith in the capacity of either the ideas or the literary forms of the Gilded Age to capture the meaning of this hog-butcher city. Fuller's and Herrick's timid realism gave

way to the modernist modes of Dreiser's dour journalistic naturalism, Sandburg's barbaric yawps, and Masters' laconic, bitter graveyard monologues. Nor was the revolution confined to artists; two of the greatest literary works of the Renaissance were not regarded as literature at all: Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (perhaps the greatest autobiography ever written by an American woman) and Thorstein Veblen's juvenalian *Theory of the Leisure Class*.

The third phase of Illinois literature — that since 1925 — is in a direct line of succession from the first two in its moral fervor in interpreting Illinois life and its use of symbolism drawn from Illinois history and landscape. American literary modernism may be described (too simply but not falsely) as the Chicago Renaissance plus Europe. James T. Farrell, in the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, brought to Chicago's mean streets the Symbolist strategies and the style of scrupulous meanness that Joyce brought to his own paralyzed city in *Dubliners*. The Russian underground man, French existentialism, and a good dose of Black anger meet in Richard Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground*. And Saul Bellow's Augie March — "Chicago, born, Chicago, that somber city" — is one of Jane Addams' immigrants caught up in the plot of a European picaresque novel.

So much for lists. I am less interested in lists — what Illinois literature is — than in what Illinois literature means. And when I think of this hundred and seventy-five year tradition, I think less of titles and dates than of people. I think of Morris Birkbeck and George Flower, traveling by ship and horseback and riverboat halfway around the world to establish a new Eden in southern Illinois, quarreling as soon as they get there, and spending the rest of their lives as neighbors but never speaking a single word to each other again. I think of a lanky loafer lounging around New Salem, trying to think of something to do with his life. "I studied what I should do," Lincoln wrote, "thought of learning the blacksmith trade, thought of trying to study law, rather thought I could not succeed at that without a better education." I think of Jane Addams, reared for the life of genteel idleness of a nineteenth-century upper-class lady, suddenly renting a run-down house in the worst slum in Chicago and moving in, determined to be a "good neighbor." I think of poor, silly Vachel Lindsay, his head full of Shelley and fundamentalism, tramping across the country looking for the "soul of the butterfly" and finding instead a horse being beaten to death in Kansas. And I think of fourteen-year-old Studs Lonigan standing in the bathroom, his sister waiting to get in, staring at himself in the mirror, "a Sweet Caporal pasted in his mug."

And when I think of this great gallery of characters out of Illinois literature, I seem to think of them most as young people, growing up. Certainly the process of growing up is a major theme in Illinois literature, maybe because life in Illinois has always been so problematical. In a fixed, static society, we know what we're growing up into. But in a young, fluid, open society, we have to create our own world as we grow up; we all have to be, like Augie March, "Columbuses of the near-at-hand."

What is it like to grow up in Illinois? Fundamentally, it's pretty much like growing up anywhere else, of course. But the terms in which the challenges of youth are put tend to have a distinctive Illinois quality, in literature if not in life. Let me be radically reductive and say that many of the challenges of growing up in Illinois can be summed up in three words: the prairie, Lincoln, and Chicago.

First, the prairie. Most of Illinois is, basically, a great big empty place. I remember the Kentucky man who moved to Illinois and, when he was asked how he liked it, replied, "It's OK, I guess, but I wish I had something to lean my eyes against." The earliest settlers of Illinois had the same reaction, plus several others. The prairie, from the very beginning, seemed to trigger anxiety. Could a person survive in such emptiness, with so little variety, so few natural boundaries? Charles Dickens, in his brief visit to Illinois in 1842, thought not:

Looking towards the setting sun, there lay, stretched out before my view, a vast expanse of level ground; unbroken, save by one thin line of trees, which scarcely amounted to a scratch upon the great blank; until it met the glowing sky, wherein it seemed to dip: mingling with its rich colours, and mellowing in its distant blue.... Great as the picture was, its very flatness and extent, which left nothing to the imagination, tamed it down and cramped its interest.... It is not a scene to be forgotten, but it is scarcely one, I think (at all events, as I saw it), to remember with much pleasure, or to covet the looking-on again, in after life.

The Dickensian reaction to the prairie as monotonous and depressing was shared by many early visitors and settlers. The very first settlers built their cabins and laid out their farms in wooded areas; if the prairie won't even grow trees, they thought, how could it grow anything else? And the Methodist circuit-rider Peter Cartwright thought that the icy, flooded prairie through which he struggled on his horse was an instructive foretaste of what hell must be like.

But fear and revulsion were accompanied from the very beginning with more affirmative feelings, often at the same time. The

prairie was not a wasteland but a garden, perhaps even The Garden, with infinite possibilities for a new Adam and a new Eve. One of the high points of George Flower's *History of the English Settlement* reports his first impression, called half a century later, of the prairie:

A few steps more, and a beautiful prairie suddenly opened to our view. At first, we only received the impressions of its general beauty. With longer gaze, all its distinctive features were revealed, lying in profound repose under the warm light of an afternoon's summer sun. Its indented and irregular outline of wood, its varied surface interspersed with clumps of oaks of centuries' growth, its tall grass, with seed stalks from six to ten feet high, like tall and slender reeds waving in a gentle breeze, the whole presenting a magnificence of park-scenery, complete from the hand of Nature, and unrivalled by the same sort of scenery by European art. For once, reality came up to the picture of imagination.

The settlement of Illinois was, among other things, part of the Romantic movement, and Flower (what an appropriate name!) was not alone in seeing the prairie as an Edenic garden, where the mind of man could play freely between "reality and the picture of imagination."

The human meaning of the prairie — the ambivalent interplay between fear and exhilaration — is a theme that persists in Illinois literature to the present day. We grow up in Illinois in the midst of a freedom of possibilities for which the prairie is a ready symbol, and early in our lives we face the challenge of building our own fences and roadways to give shape to our own personal prairies.

Growing up in Illinois requires not only coming to terms with the prairie but also coming to terms with the image of Lincoln. And I use "Lincoln" as a sort of shorthand for all our Illinois models of manhood and womanhood. Who was Lincoln? Judging from what has been written about him, he was a saint and a rascal, a frontier jokester and a melancholy isolate, a good husband and a bad husband, a rustic innocent and a conniving politician, the friend of the people and the friend of robber barons, even a man (everybody's "Father Abraham") and a woman (with his shawl and his little shopping basket). The more one reads about Lincoln, the more one realizes one is dealing not with a real person but with the object of massive personal projections, a sort of bearded Rorschach test. In what is still perhaps the best book on Lincoln, the *Life* by Lincoln's old law partner Billy Herndon, Lincoln gradually turns into Billy Herndon, both what he is — sardonic,

agnostic, misogynistic — and what he would like to be — intellectually brilliant and personally charismatic.

Beneath all these projections, Lincoln is the mythic embodiment of the "western character" — "Old Abe from out of the West." And the image of the "western character" has given both inspiration and anxiety to young people growing up, both male and female, throughout the history of Illinois writing. The inner theme of Grant's *Personal Memoirs* is maturation, the gradual development of a personal identity after a long period of confusion and wandering, and the figures Grant measures himself against in his personal odyssey are Lincoln and Lee, Lincoln as an embodiment of mission and conviction, Lee as the personification of the older aristocratic tradition in opposition to which Grant comes to define himself. To later writers, too, Lincoln becomes a symbol of personal ego ideals. There are Jane Addams' Lincoln, tender, compassionate, and almost indistinguishable from her father; Vachel Lindsay's Lincoln, unable to sleep upon his hillside because of man's inhumanity to man; Edgar Lee Masters' Lincoln, alternately idealized and vilified in a complex expression of Masters' own ambivalence toward himself; Carl Sandburg's monumental Lincoln, the culmination of his lifelong search for a hero equal to the People; and even Saul Bellow's Lincoln: "the classic American hero — manic-depressive."

And finally, there is Chicago, balanced against the prairie not only as a setting but as a state of mind. Already by the 1890's, twenty years after the Great Fire, Chicago had become a problem. The population had more than tripled in those twenty years, mostly from floods of immigrants who poured into the city and settled in abject slums. Business was booming, and so was violence. The Haymarket affair, the Pullman strike, and the rise of such giant monopolies as Charles Yerkes' Chicago streetcar company became symbols of the times. What did they mean?

Sooner or later, in almost every Illinois novel or autobiography from 1890 on, there occurs a stock scene that might be called The Approach to Chicago, and the characters' first reactions to the city are a good index of what Chicago came to mean in the American imagination. Their reactions, often enough, echo the early settlers' first responses to the prairie. The first reaction is awe, mingled with fear. Here is Rose, in Hamlin Garland's *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*, getting her first sight of Chicago coming in on the train from Wisconsin:

"See that cloud?" someone said; "that's Chicago."

Rose looked — far to the south-east a gigantic smoke-cloud soared above the low horizon line, in shape like an eagle, whose

hovering wings extended from south to east, trailing mysterious shadows upon the earth. The sun lighted its mighty crest with crimson light, and its gloom and glow became more sharply contrasted. Towards this portentous presence the train rushed, uttering an occasional shrill neigh, like a stallion's defiance.

Laura Dearborn, in Frank Norris's *The Pit*, is even more shaken by her first look at Chicago:

"There is something terrible about it," she murmured, half to herself, "something insensate. In a way, it doesn't seem human. It's like a great tidal wave. It's all very well for the individual just so long as he can keep afloat, but once fallen, how horribly quick it would crush him, annihilate him, how horribly quick, and with such horrible indifference! I suppose it's civilization in the making, the thing that isn't meant to be seen, as though it were too elemental, too—primordial; like the first verses of Genesis."

And yet, as with the prairie, fear and revulsion are mixed with exhilaration, the sense that the real energy and freedom of American life are here, if only they can be controlled. Laura's sense of Chicago's brutality and indifference is accompanied by admiration:

Here, of all her cities, throbbed the true life—the true power and spirit of America; gigantic, crude with the crudity of youth, disdaining rivalry; sane and healthy and vigorous; brutal of its ambition, arrogant in the new-found knowledge of its giant strength, prodigal of its wealth, infinite in its desires. In its capacity boundless, in its courage indomitable; subduing the wilderness in a single generation, defying calamity, and through the flame and the debris of a commonwealth in ashes, rising suddenly renewed, formidable, and Titanic.

This ambivalence is reported, with variations, in many versions of *The Approach to Chicago*, in Carl Sandburg's autobiographical *Always the Young Strangers*, when Sandburg remembers his first trip to Chicago, eighteen years old, a dollar and a half in his pocket, and determined to stay until his money ran out; in Edgar Lee Masters' *Across Spoon River*, when the twenty-two year old Masters takes the train in from Lewistown to make his way in the big city; when Frank Cowperwood first glimpses the city in Dreiser's *The Titan*; and of course, most famously, in Sandburg's "Chicago."

The prairie, Lincoln, and Chicago: these are the recurring emblems in the literature of Illinois. And like all good emblems, they have rich, multiple meanings. They can be regarded quite literally; they were, after all, real forces in Illinois history. They also have a sort of natural symbolism, suggesting general forces in American life: freedom, heroism, and the anti-Eden of urbanization and industrialization. But they also have personal meanings. (Writers

are, after all, people who take everything personally.) And I would like to think through with you very briefly how the prairie, Lincoln, and Chicago figured in the growing up of a few Illinois characters, both real and fictional.

Take Jane Addams. *Twenty Years at Hull-House* is one of the great stories of growing up in America, and unlike most of the others — Franklin's *Autobiography*, *The Education of Henry Adams*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Catcher in the Rye* — this one is about growing up female. *Twenty Years at Hull-House* is far from a straight-forward, chronological autobiography. Addams leaves out many of the externally most important events in her life and instead structures her book around a series of crucial memories — "spots of time" in Wordsworth's sense — some of them trivial from an objective point of view, but all of them significant in the development of her sense of herself and of the world. This is a quest narrative, and the object of Addams' quest is the answer to two questions: What is woman's nature? and How can we encounter reality directly, without interposing protective veils of theories, idealizations, and preconceptions?

Each of the first five chapters of the book — the pre-Chicago chapters — proposes provisional answers to these questions, all partially valid but all ultimately rejected as Addams moves closer to answers that correspond to her own sense of reality. The first chapter is devoted to her father, forever associated in her mind with the Illinois landscape. John Huy Addams, a Quaker from Pennsylvania, was a miller and a state senator; his daughter adored him, and she remembers spending hours rubbing wheat between her finger and thumb in order to develop a flattened "miller's thumb" like her father's. When years later, she met Tolstoy, she compares his reverence for bread with her father's benevolent trade of milling. The father's moral values center around the Quaker concept of the "inner light"; "mental integrity above everything else," he tells his daughter.

This code is never explicitly rejected, but its limitations become clear in the next chapter: "Influence of Lincoln." The elder Addams was a friend of Lincoln, and Addams remembers a thin packet of letters he kept in his desk marked "Mr. Lincoln's Letters," all beginning, "My dear Double-D'ed Addams." Addams acknowledge's that Lincoln came to be a father-figure for her: "I always tend to associate Lincoln with the tenderest thoughts of my father," she writes. But she also comes to feel that Lincoln's warm humanitarianism represents an advance upon her father's values. Lincoln went beyond her father's "mental integrity above all else" to embody an ideal of love for one's fellow man. This

pattern of adopting partial goods and then discarding or amplifying them continues in successive chapters. Lincoln's humanitarianism must be amplified by feminism and pacifism, which in turn must be given reality by immersion in real experience.

Meanwhile, Addams is living the life of a traditional leisure-class woman: idle, passive, devoted to self-cultivation rather than to any sort of involvement in the real world. The turning point comes with a shattering experience at a bullfight in Madrid in 1888. The bullfight was carried out in "the most magnificent Spanish style," and after her companions had left in disgust at the bloodshed, Addams stayed on, fascinated by "the sense that this was the last survival of all the glories of the amphitheater, the illusion that the riders on the caparisoned horses might have been knights at a tournament, or the matador a slightly armed gladiator facing his martyrdom, and all the rest of the obscure yet vivid associations of a historic survival." At the end of the bullfight, she realizes that insulated by such romantic idealizations, she has watched, with comparative indifference, five bulls and many more horses killed. The bull-ring becomes a microcosm in Addams' mind, the slaughter representative of the cruelty of the world and herself the symbol of genteel femininity passively looking on and narcotizing herself against reality with the romantic idealizations of "culture." After a night of self-loathing and self-reproach, she presents her plan to move into an urban slum and be a good neighbor to her friend Ellen Starr, and the two leave almost immediately for Chicago to put the plan into effect. The rest of the book recounts her confrontation with the reality of the Halsted Street slums and her attempts to redeem the brutal city by recreating there the peace and sense of purpose of her father's prairie home.

Or take Murphy in Mark Costello's wonderful 1973 short story, "Murphy's Xmas." "Murphy's Xmas" is the last story in *The Murphy Stories*, a "novel in short stories" which is another *bildungsroman*, a story of growing up in Decatur, "dear, dirty Decatur." No two protagonists could be more different than Jane Addams and drunken, brawling, tormented Murphy, but more than half a century later, he draws upon the same Illinois emblems to define himself. At the end of a painfully failed marriage, Murphy leaves his girl friend in Kansas for two weeks to drive his estranged wife and their son Michael back to Illinois for Christmas. The prairie, "the flat mauve stretches of Illinois," is a major presence in the story. Murphy barrels in a borrowed VW from Kansas to his wife's hometown in Illinois, then northwest into Iowa, back to his wife's hometown, then to Decatur, back to his wife's town, back to Decatur, back to his wife's town, back to Decatur, back

to his wife's town, back to Kansas. The open prairie has become a prison, in which Murphy's movements are tormented and meaningless, like the pacing of the caged leopards he and Michael see at the zoo.

The movement of the VW with Murphy, his wife, and son becomes an ironic flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; this is after all a Christmas story — or maybe just an Xmas story. But even more ironically it is also the progress of Lincoln's funeral train back to his hometown. This is a story about fathers; Murphy grieves more over being a failed father than a failed husband, and he must come to terms with his own father's disapproval of his divorce. He frames his plight in Lincolnesque terms; driving through Springfield, he tries to recite "When Lilacs Last at the Dooryard Bloom'd" to his son.

At Springfield, where they stop to take on gas, the fluorescent light of the filling station is like the clap of a blue hand across the face. Murphy's son wakes and his wife says: This is where President Lincoln lived and is buried.

Where?

In a tomb. Out there.

She points a finger past his nose and Murphy makes a promise he knows he can't keep: I know what. Do you want to hear a poem, Michael?

With his son at the back of his neck all snug in a car that he should never have presumed to borrow, he drives through Springfield trying to remember "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." But he can't get past the first stanza. Three times he repeats "O powerful western fallen star," and then goes in prose about the coffin moving across the country with the pomp of the inloop'd flags through cities draped in black until his son is asleep again.

The scene is echoed two weeks later when, as Murphy drives his wife and son back to Kansas, Michael makes a pistol of his fist and index finger and points it at his father: "Bang, bang, bang. You're dead, Daddy, you're dead." Murphy's failure both as son and father is measured, as it would be for an Illinois boy, against the images of Lincoln and Booth. Back in Kansas, in bed with Annie, the memory of Michael returns:

Then Michael stands over them, takes aim at Murphy and makes his final declaration: Bang

bang, bang

you're dead Daddy

you're dead

And for the first time in his life, Murphy lies there and knows it.

Or, finally, take *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, published in 1980 by William Maxwell, from Lincoln, Illinois, and for thirty years a fiction editor for the *New Yorker*. Reviewers compared the book to Hemingway's *In Our Time*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Porter's *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, and I believe that within a few years it will become recognized as one of the great novels of American literature.

So Long, See You Tomorrow is a memory novel, the narrative of an elderly man in New York, casting his mind back more than fifty years to his boyhood in Lincoln. He remembers two stories, the first the story of a long-forgotten murder case in Lincoln. A tenant farmer named Lloyd Wilson was shot and killed while milking his cows early one morning. The murderer was another farmer named Clarence Smith, a neighbor of Wilson's, and the motive was jealousy over Wilson's love affair with Smith's wife, Fern. The other story is the story of his own childhood: his mother's death when he was ten years old and his father's remarriage and move into a new house. Telling both stories are acts of exorcism and atonement for the narrator: in the course of telling them, he must come to terms with his own grief over his mother's death and his guilt over unintentionally snubbing Smith's son Cleus in a high school hallway. And as he tells them, the two stories become closely interwoven. This is a story about story-telling; memory itself is story-telling. "In talking about the past," Maxwell says, "we lie with every breath we draw," but in these lies and in the sympathetic imagination lies the key to understanding, both of oneself and of the world.

The images of the prairie, of Lincoln, and of the city are basic in *So Long, See You Tomorrow*. The novel reverses the progress of American civilization from prairie to village to town to city, as the narrator, walking the streets of New York, thinks back upon an incident in a Chicago high school hallway, upon his earlier life in Lincoln, and upon a murder on the prairie. This is a powerfully regressive novel, a "return to the scene of the crime," and as in his childhood memories he finds the hidden wound of his mother's death, so in the garden of the prairie, he finds a violent crime. "When I dream about Lincoln," Maxwell writes, "it is always the way it was in my childhood. Or rather, I dream that it is that way — for the geography has been tampered with and is half real, half a rearrangement of my sleeping mind." But the dream Lincoln and the dream prairie are not idealized. The serpent is already in the garden in Maxwell's earliest memories.

This is a novel about the prairie, and the prairie becomes a symbol for the condition of men who could say, with Lloyd Wilson, "All my life I've been a stranger to myself." The tragedy of Lloyd Wilson and Fern Smith is related directly to the isolation of prairie life, where there can spring up intense preoccupations with the only neighbor in view, where loneliness is a continual presence, and where one's own feelings and behavior cannot be measured against those of a varied society. For the town-reared Maxwell, the story of the Wilsons and the Smiths is specifically a tale of prairie people, so readily identifiable in the courthouse square on Saturday night.

And it is a story about Lincoln, the man as well as the town, and of all the problems of masculine identity associated with the "Western character." If Lincoln, Illinois, did not exist, Maxwell would have had to invent it as the setting for his tale, and when he orders newspaper files on the Wilson case, he reflects that it is as if he were inquiring not into the death of Lloyd Wilson but into the funeral of Abraham Lincoln. Maxwell, half a century past his boyhood, is still trying to come to terms with his own sensitivity measured against his father's brusqueness and frightening sexuality, his brother's hearty athleticism, and the passion and violence of his imaginary creations, Lloyd Wilson and Clarence Smith. He doubts that "the heavy-businessman-father-and-the-oversensitive-artistic-son syndrome exists anymore. Fathers have become sympathetic and kiss their grown sons when they feel like it, and who knows what oversensitive is, considering all there is to be sensitive to." But for him, the syndrome still persists, through half a century.

So Long, See You Tomorrow is a great American novel. But it is a great Illinois novel, too. Behind its preoccupations and its metaphoric structure lies a tradition of Illinois writing that goes back to the very beginning of Illinois. When writing about his deepest concerns, Maxwell turns instinctively to the Illinois metaphors of the prairie, Lincoln, and Chicago. And like a long and distinguished line of Illinois writers before him, he doesn't have to think about them: he's got them in his bones.